

SESSION 55: THINGS CHANGE

Genesis 9:1-7, 8-17

January 5, 2025

PREFACE

The break between Chapters Eight and Nine while not egregious, is unnecessary, for the narrative flows seamlessly from one into the other. God’s blessing in 9:1-3 is the direct result of the “soothing aroma” rising from Noah’s sacrificial altar, and is a continuation of His promise in 8:21-22.

Although I suppose one can (and commentators often do) combine verses 8:20 to 9:17 into one “covenant-promise,” I believe it is more helpful and accurate to organize it in the following way:

8:21-22	Yahweh’s promise not to again “curse the ground” because of man’s sin
9:1-7	God’s blessing , including new rules between man and beast, and between man and man
9:8-17	God’s formal covenant (which He promised in 6:18) that he would never again destroy the earth and flesh by means of a flood

GOD’S BLESSING

Read Genesis 9:1-7.

Verses 1 and 7 demarcate a mini-inclusio.

1: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”
7: “As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Swarm on the earth and multiply in it.”

Between these two verses, with their familiar call repeated from 1:22 (beasts) and 1:28 (man and woman), we have the inception of a new order on earth. Things have changed; there are new rules in place.

v2

“And the fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.”

If this show were being run by humans, I would say a great awakening has taken place—that now it is clear that humanity and the other beasts on earth require a different program—different rules.

But this show is being run by its omniscient Creator; He is not surprised by any of this; recent events have not sparked a fresh awakening in Him. No, man is behaving just as Yahweh God knew He would. This is simply the next foreordained step in the “evolution” of the earth. What began as a paradise of peaceful harmony between man and beast has devolved into warfare.

So even today, when I step outside to feed the deer, they run from me—they snort and stomp their feet at me, even though they know I am going to put out food for them. Why? Because it is now in their DNA that humans *shoot* deer. They know that instinctively from birth.

While we today may see this moment as a good thing—those who prefer meat and potatoes over Brussels sprouts and other rabbit food—it actually marks a sad decline in man. Pleasant harmony is at an end; now, in many respects, there will exist a contentious relationship between man and beast.

So even though in some respects this is a “beginning again” moment, it is a different, a *sadder* restart, acknowledging, even in the righteous Noah, the presence of sin. This is a *fallen* restart to Creation.

v3

“Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; as with the green plant, I give all to you.”

Back in Chapter One God “gave”—*nathan* (naw-THAN)—other food to both the humans and the beasts.

Read Genesis 1:29-30.

Man and beast alike were created vegetarian. The first *recorded* death was the righteous offering Abel made (4:4), but probably the first death of an animal (or animals) occurred when Yahweh God made coverings for the man and woman out of “skins” (Hebrew, *or*). This act may have also been of a sacrificial nature, setting the pattern for the shedding of innocent blood to atone for sin.

Before that, during the earliest days of Creation, God had given man dominion—to rule, to dominate, to prevail—over the beasts (1:28). But He did not give them to him as food. As Leupold points out, “If men before the flood ever ate the meat of beasts, they did so without divine sanction.”

Now things will change; now using the same word (*nathan*), God gives man, again, all the beasts. But now He expands the gift. And just in case it may be misunderstood, God makes clear that what He means is that man may now consume meat just as he always has the green plant.

v4

Foreshadowing the Law, God now adds a caveat to the new rule:
“However, flesh with its life, that is, its blood, you shall not eat.”

Read Leviticus 7:26-27.

The word rendered “its life” in our passage is *nephesh*, which means the soul; the breathing essence of being. Leviticus 17:11 establishes the connection between life/soul and blood.

‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.’

Physically this is true: without our blood, we die. And God demonstrates the *spiritual* aspect of this—and, in a sense turning it around—by requiring the *shedding* of blood for eternal life with Him. The body of both man and beast requires blood to live, but blood must be *shed* to live with God.

v5

“Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every living thing I will require it. And from every man, from each man’s brother I will require the life of man.”

God’s word is truly marvelous. I admit that reading v5 in the LSB or NASB, while true to the original text, can leave the reader wondering, *Just what is being said here?* Some of our other versions do translate it in a more explanatory fashion, but what, once again, makes the Bible such a remarkable document is that the very next verse explains the previous—and in poetic verse, no less.

v6

**“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.”**

Here too is a change of sorts. Cain's killing of his brother Abel was an act of cold-blooded murder. By the command in Chapter Nine he should have been executed for this—which was not just homicide, but *fratricide*. Yet, Yahweh did *not* kill him, but punished Cain with exile—even protecting his life with a sign.

We could come up with a number of reasons why Yahweh chose to countermand His position; being God, He would have every right. What I do *not* believe to be correct is to assume that this, here in Chapter Nine, is a brand new position for God. It is only an explicit command new to man. And, of course, this will be included in the formal Law handed down to Moses. First regarding beasts (v5: “from every living thing”):

Read Exodus 21:28-29.

Then regarding man,

Read Exodus 21:12-14.

I would say that this command in Chapter Nine is fundamental to all the laws that follow, for it flows out of the root of man's Creation *by* God “in the *image* of God.” In fact, some say (with Luther) that v6 institutes government as a basic institution for the welfare of society. Here is where earthly human government is invented.

The fundamental fact that man has been created in the image of God is what makes intentional abortion so heinous: it matters not whether the baby is still in the womb or out, it is still a human being made in the image of God!

v7

**“As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Swarm on the earth and multiply in it.”**

Our other versions try to be more refined in their choice of words, but the LSB is quite accurate in translating the Hebrew *sharas* (shaw-RAHTS) “swarm” (KJV: “bring forth abundantly”). The verb *sharas*, and its noun form, *sheres*, have a decidedly insect-like connotation: to swarm, teem; teeming things, creeping things. The root means “to wriggle.”

This is the same word—both noun and verb—used by God in Genesis 1:20, during the fifth day of Creation.

Then God said, “Let the waters **swarm with **swarms** of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens.” (emphasis added)**

The implication of this more strenuous term in a reiteration of the command to “be fruitful and multiply” is that God considers it a priority that the earth be quickly repopulated.

GOD’S COVENANT

Read Genesis 9:8-17.

We will just begin our look at this covenant, finishing it in our next session.

v8 (WITH v1)

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

I confess that my initial reaction to this, along with v1, was *Hey, what about the women? They, too, have just weathered this year-long inundation! What about them?*

But God has His order, and part of that is that the man is the corporate head of the family. It is enough for Him to address that head, with the understanding that what flows into him flows out to the rest. And, as we saw in the *first* family, when righteous retribution is called for, the bulk of that falls upon the male corporate head. No matter that physically, *Eve* was the first to sin, “...in *Adam* all die...” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I believe these two verses also reinforce my position in our previous session that the emphasis now is on the individual family units that will be branching out from Noah and his wife. If God had just addressed this to Noah, alone, we still would have understood that the blessings and the covenant apply downward, through the succeeding generations. But the point is made, by including Noah’s sons, that God is addressing *four* family units. That is, from here on out we will see the narrative proceeding through the three sons and their families—clearly set forth in vv18-19.

“As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you;”

Most earthly covenants are established between two parties, both of which are obligated by certain agreements necessary to keep the covenant in effect. Some covenants even established by God are like this. For example, in Genesis Seventeen God establishes His covenant with Abram, but requires of him that he be blameless.

Now it happened that when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me and be blameless, so that I may confirm My covenant between Me and you, And that I may multiply you exceedingly.” (Genesis 17:1–2)

Along with this, the sign of this covenant would be not something produced by God, but a sign of obedience and of belonging to God and the Jewish people: every male would be circumcised.

Here, in Chapter Nine, however, with Noah and His descendants, God cuts a covenant that is entirely one-sided: the obligation is entirely upon Himself.

Ger de Koning: God establishes a covenant not only with Noah, but also with all his descendants and with all creation... In this covenant there are no obligations for Noah and his descendants. God takes upon Himself all obligations to keep this covenant. It is a one-sided covenant. The foundation is the offering. When clouds appear again, man need not be afraid of a new flood.

Alexander MacLaren: Note the great thought, that God limits His freedom of action by this definite promise. Noah was not left to grope in dread among the terrible possibilities opened by the flood. God marked out the line on which He would move, and marked off a course which He would not pursue. It is like a king giving his subjects a constitution. Men can reckon on God.

One thing we are learning from this study is that the Lord God’s generous longsuffering and mercy did not begin with Israel and followers of Christ, but was evident from the very beginning of Creation.

SESSION 55

Things Change
Genesis 9:1-7, 8-17

Organizing the Text

- 8:21-22 Yahweh's **promise** not to again "curse the ground" because of man's sin
9:1-7 God's **blessing**, including new rules between man and beast, and between man and man
9:8-17 God's **formal covenant** (which He promised in 6:18) that he would never again destroy the earth and flesh by means of a flood

God's Blessing

v2

Even though in some respects this is a "beginning again" moment, it is a different, a *sadder* restart, acknowledging, even in the righteous Noah, the presence of sin. This is a *fallen* restart to Creation.

v3

While we today may see this moment as a good thing, it actually marks a sad decline in man. Pleasant harmony is at an end; now, in many respects, there will exist a contentious relationship between man and beast.

Man and beast alike were created vegetarian. The first *recorded* death was the righteous offering Abel made (4:4), but probably the first death of an animal (or animals) occurred when Yahweh God made coverings for the man and woman out of "skins" (Hebrew, *or*). This act may have also been of a sacrificial nature, setting the pattern for the shedding of innocent blood to atone for sin.

v4

The word rendered "its life" in our passage is *nephesh*, which means the soul; the breathing essence of being. Leviticus 17:11 establishes the connection between life/soul and blood.

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.'

Physically this is true: without our blood, we die. And God demonstrates the *spiritual* aspect of this—and, in a sense turning it around—by requiring the *shedding* of blood for eternal life with Him. The body of both man and beast requires blood to live, but blood must be *shed* to live with God.

v7

Our other versions try to be more refined in their choice of words, but the LSB is quite accurate in translating the Hebrew *sharas* (shaw-RAHTS) "swarm" (KJV: "bring forth abundantly"). The verb *sharas*, and its noun form, *sheres*, have a decidedly insect-like connotation: to swarm, teem; teeming things, creeping things. The root means "to wriggle."

God's Covenant

v9

Here, in Chapter Nine, however, with Noah and His descendants, God cuts a covenant that is entirely one-sided: the obligation is entirely upon Himself.

Alexander MacLaren: Note the great thought, that God limits His freedom of action by this definite promise. Noah was not left to grope in dread among the terrible possibilities opened by the flood. God marked out the line on which He would move, and marked off a course which He would not pursue. It is like a king giving his subjects a constitution. Men can reckon on God.

For complete notes and audios for each session, go to DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/

